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Tips for Cloning Tasks

Rhode Island Skills Commission

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Explanation and Considerations for Use

The Rhode Island Skills Commission and its network of schools developed this document to assist schools in cloning or generating new prompts from tasks that have already been developed. Cloning existing tasks will allow you to decrease the time it takes to generate all of your assignments and tasks from scratch. This represents one approach to this process; your school may choose to adopt it or may want to explore other approaches.

Tips for Cloning Tasks

Replacing an old prompt with a new one seems like an easy way to create a new task. And it basically is. Still, there are some things to keep in mind that will make your work as successful as possible.

- Think about the standard or the GSE that the prompt is connected to. What are the different kinds of things students could do that would demonstrate the proficiency described there? Since the Standards and GSEs are pretty broad, there may be lots of alternative ways to show the same proficiency.

- Reflect on your teaching experience during the last year and try to remember activities that have been particularly successful with your students. Thinking about what made these activities successful will help you focus on what kind of prompt would be interesting to the widest possible range of students. Remember, an interested student is far more likely to do good work that one who is not.

- Clearly define for your self what you want your prompt to ask students to do. Remember, prompts always ask students to do something with what they have learned. So you need to know what (their prior knowledge) you want students to apply, and how you want them to apply it. Defining these two parts clearly is a precondition for a good prompt. Then, of course, these two parts have to clearly connect to what a standard or GSE describes.

- Strip the prompt down to bare essentials: don't be chatty, don't clutter it up with details that are distracting or—worse yet—confusing. Prompts posed with complex language or reflecting cultural differences can make it difficult for students to demonstrate what they know.

- Be prepared: bring materials, references and whatever else artifacts you think would be helpful to write your prompt. Often the materials themselves provide insight and inspiration, so make sure you have plenty.

- Make sure the prompt poses a meaningful (authentic) challenge that stretches the student (challenges them to thoughtfully, inventively, carefully, etc. use what they know). Easy prompts waste every one's time.